

Application No.: 10/083,263

REMARKS

Claims 1-9, 19 and 20 are pending in this application. Claim 1 has been amended. Claims 10-18 have been cancelled.

Claims 1-9, 19 and 20 were rejected under 35 USC 101 for being directed to nonstatutory subject matter. Specifically, the Examiner stated that Claim 1 includes "at least one problem solver", which is disclosed to be a human being, which recitation caused Claim 1 to be rejected as non-statutory subject matter. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Claim 1, as amended, recites a customer satisfaction system, comprising: a query module for automatically sending queries to customers as to problems with goods or services provided by a provider according to a predetermined schedule and for receiving responses from customers to the queries, wherein a query includes an interface for receiving responses input from a customer; an analysis module for analyzing responses from customers to identify a customer problem, for sending the identified customer problem to a problem solver module for resolution by a problem solver, and for tracking status of the identified customer problem; and at least one problem solver module for receiving an identified customer problem from the analysis module, for transmitting the identified customer problem to a problem solver, for receiving a solution to the identified customer problem from the problem solver, and for transmitting the solution to the customer; wherein, upon transmission of the solution to the identified customer problem to the customer, the problem solver module notifies the analysis module of the solution and the analysis module causes the query module to send a query to the customer requesting verification that the problem has been solved.

Applicants' Claim 1, as amended, does not claim a human being. Customers and problem solvers, who may be human beings, are described only inferentially and are not positively claimed. Customer problems are generated by customers. Problem solutions are generated by problem solvers. Applicants' system is intended to be used by human beings and has been used by customers, problem solvers and providers.

Applicants' system integrates customer problems with problem solutions. Customer problems are "sensed" through the query module, which sends queries to customers automatically. An analysis module determines if any customer responses are problems. If a customer problem is identified by the analysis module, the analysis module sends it to a problem

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solver module. The problem solver module provides an interface to a problem solver for receiving the customer problem. The problem solver finds a solution and provides the solution to the problem solver module (the solution may be provided directly to the customer). The problem solver module provides the solution to the analysis module, which tracks all customer problems. Upon transmission of the solution to the identified customer problem to the customer, the problem solver module notifies the analysis module of the solution and the analysis module causes the query module to send a query to the customer requesting verification that the problem has been solved. The claimed structure in Claims 1-9, 19 and 29 is not directed to a human being and Claims 1-9, 19 and 20 are believed to be directed to statutory subject matter.

Claims 1-18 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sakakibara et al. (US paten no. 6,564,227) in view of the Admitted Prior Art. The Examiner defines the "Admitted Prior Art" as the Examiner's Official Notice that it is old and well known in the art to send "follow-up" queries to customers in order to verify that the work performed was done to the customer's satisfaction. The Examiner further stated that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the system of '227 to schedule an additional query right after a fault has been handled in order to verify that the problem has been solved to the customer's satisfaction. Applicants respectfully disagree.

1. Nothing in Sakakibara et al. teaches or suggests "a query module for automatically sending queries to customers as to problems with goods or services provided by a provider according to a predetermined schedule and for receiving responses from customers to the queries" as recited in Applicants' Claim 1.

Sakakibara et al. is directed to a customer support system, which relies on collecting information pertaining to a device located at a customer and to use the usage information and quality information of the device to give various facilities to the customer (col. 1, lines 45-48 of Sakakibara et al.). At col. 9, lines 34-36 Sakakibara et al state that "the customer support center 11 can also remotely set data which the device should transmit or the time at which the device should transmit the data." The Examiner contends this represents automatically querying the customer at a predetermined time as to problems with goods. Applicants respectfully disagree.

The system taught by Sakakibara et al. is limited to receiving responses from devices on faults and usage information. The system taught by Sakakibara et al. cannot provide responses

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"as to problems with goods or services provided by a provider." Automatically querying a device to cause it to report certain data is not the same as "automatically sending, according to a predetermined schedule, a query to a customer as to problems with goods or services provided by a provider to the customer". The system of Sakakibara et al. can automatically set what data the device should transmit and when the device should transmit data (the system should receive data). See Sakakibara et al. col. 9, lines 32-36. Applicants' system sets the time and period for sending automatic queries. Applicants' system does not set the time when customers should respond.

2. Nothing in Sakakibara et al. teaches or suggests "wherein a query includes a user interface for receiving responses input from a customer."

The system taught by Sakakibara et al. is limited to collecting mechanical and electrical data from devices on faults and usage information. The "query" taught by Sakakibara et al. is a signal to the device to transmit this information. The system taught by Sakakibara et al. does not teach a query which includes "a user interface for receiving responses input from a customer".

3. Nothing in Sakakibara et al. teaches or suggests "wherein the analysis module includes a pattern recognition system for analyzing customer responses" as recited in Claim 5.

The system of Sakakibara et al. is automatic, and deals only with mechanical or electrical data from devices, not responses from customers to queries. There is no need to analyze customer responses in the system of Sakakibara et al. because no customer responses are received. Furthermore, device responses in the form of mechanical or electrical data do not require pattern recognition.

4. There is no teaching to combine Sakakibara et al. and the Admitted Prior Art. The Examiner asserts that it would be obvious to modify the system of Sakakibara et al. to send a query to the user requesting that the problem has been solved. Applicants respectfully disagree. The system of Sakakibara et al. is automatic, and deals only with data from devices, not from customers. There is no need to request a verification from the user in Sakakibara et al. since the system can monitor independently whether the device is working properly. Indeed, one of the purposes of the system of Sakakibara et al. is to minimize contact with users (since customer calls are expensive). Sakakibara et al.'s system is directed to automatic monitoring of devices and automatic removing of fault messages once the fault has been removed (for example, by the

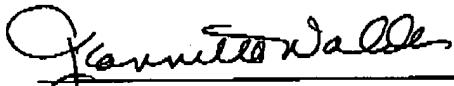
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customer or by receipt of quality information or after a predetermined period of time). See col. 2, lines 35-47 of Sakakibara et al.

Accordingly, Claims 1-9, 19 and 20 are believed to be patentable over Sakakibara et al. and the Admitted Prior Art.

Consideration of this application and allowance thereof are earnestly solicited. In the event the Examiner considers a personal contact advantageous to the disposition of this case, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned Attorney for Applicants, Jeannette Walder.

Respectfully submitted,



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